LOOKING BACK DOWN THE ROAD

National Park Service Studies One of the First Interstates

In 1913, a group of industrial barons drove out of Indianapolis, following the primitive byways and backroads to the Pacific. Their goal: choose a route for one of the nation's first paved transcontinental highways. That expedition—led by Carl Fisher, chief of the Prest-O-Lite headlight company—included executives from the automobile, tire, and cement industries. Their vision culminated in the 3,300-mile-long Lincoln Highway, starting in New York's Times Square and ending in downtown San Francisco. Long before the legendary Route 66, the first Chryslers, Packards, and Model Ts clattered down Route 40, which played a pivotal role in how the automobile influenced American life in the 20th century.

Nearly a century later, the National Park Service has released a congressionally authorized special resource study on preserving and commemorating the highway. Over three years, a team of historians, architects, preservationists, and geographers evaluated the highway as a historic entity—and potential park unit—identifying how what remains expresses the era of early automobile travel. The route, which seeded a thriving roadside culture, was a venue for innovative ways to market gas, food, and lodging by way of bold graphics and architecture. The role of the early auto executives foreshadowed the later relationship between the car industry and highway construction. On the eve of

Above: Between Stockton and Livermore, California. Right top: Near Joliet, Illinois, 1915. Right bottom: Wilson Bridge over Conococheague Creek, Maryland, in operation until 1937; Cook County, west of Chicago, 1918.

World War I, most roads were unpaved and disorganized. Cross-country car travel was almost unheard of. Carl Fisher and his associates, foreseeing the rise in the number of auto owners, formed the Lincoln Highway Association to collect private funds and promote the idea. As their businesses prospered, they started a highway network, preceding by more than a decade any notion of a federal interstate system. In short order, Route 40 was the nation's major cross-country route and a lab for new kinds of roads and bridges.

"Americans readily viewed the Lincoln Highway as the modern equivalent of the Oregon Trail or the transcontinental railroad, facilitating long distance travel and exploration at one's own pace," says the study. The highway represented the American landscape in transition, at the twilight of the railroad and the dawn of the automobile.

Most of the original route's context has gone the way of history, researchers say, negating its eligibility for the National Park System. Still, much remains. The study's proposed alternative is to form a nonprofit organization (or appoint an existing one) to develop preservation grants, interpretive exhibits, and travel itineraries. The National Park Service could offer financial and technical support. Congress will decide on a final course of action.

The Federal Highway Administration and the Organization of American Historians (represented by Kevin Patrick of Indiana University of Pennsylvania) cooperated in the study. The report is online at www.nps.gov/mwro/lincolnhighway.

For more information, contact Ruth Heikkinen, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, 601 Riverfront Drive, Omaha, NE 68102, (402) 661-1846, email ruth_heikkinen@nps.gov.

WRIGHT AWARD FOR COMMON GROUND

Common Ground has won the George Wright Society's 2005 communications award.

The nonprofit society, with professionals from an array of preservation fields, gives the award "to recognize outstanding efforts in communicating highly technical or controversial park-related subjects to the public in a clear and understandable manner."

Through its journal, the George Wright Forum, the society strives to encourage critical thinking on matters related to protected natural and cultural areas.

The society gives awards in other categories as well, and winners of all 2005 awards will be recognized at the society's biennial meeting in Philadelphia in March. Editor David Andrews will accept the award on behalf of the magazine.

Visit the George Wright Society on the web at www.georgewright.org.

ALL PHOTOS UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LINCOLN HIGHWAY DIGITAL IMAGE COLLECTION EXCEPT AS NOTED

NPS/HABS

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

Lessons in History

New Online Teaching Tools Feature Trail of Tears, Industrial Revolution, Liberty Ships

Three new offerings are available in the National Park Service Teaching with Historic Places series, classroom-ready aids that use National Register properties and national historic landmarks to instruct school children in grades 5 to 12.

In **Trail of Tears: The Forced Relocation of the Cherokee Nation,** students see, in a single event, the effect of westward expansion on native populations. Maps of ancestral Cherokee lands, images, and readings offer a portrait of 1830s America. The lesson draws from research on the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail and National Register properties along the route.

One of the nation's finest concert halls introduces students to the realities of the Industrial Revolution. **Mechanics Hall: A Symbol of Pride and Industry** illustrates the transformation of New England's Blackstone River Valley, today a national heritage corridor. The hall, a National Register property in Worcester, Massachusetts, was built in 1857 by a mechanics' union to entertain and educate the city's industrial workers. Worcester was a manufacturing center and activist hotbed; some of the 19th century's major figures spoke there, including Charles Dickens and Susan B. Anthony.

In Yellowstone's Attic

Park Builds New Museum for Five-Million-Artifact Collection

As the first national park and one of the country's crown jewels, Yellowstone long ago achieved icon status. As further evidence of its stature, a new 32,000-square-foot museum and research center was completed this summer to accommodate the park's enormous collection of artifacts, records, and memorabilia. The $6.1 million Yellowstone Heritage and Research Center, near the north entrance, provides not only facilities for storage, but space for the hundreds of researchers who come to study park resources every year.

Until recently, some five million items were shoehorned into a visitor center basement—archives, biological specimens, rare books, correspondence, fossils, old ranger uniforms, maps, stuffed birds, and other items. The new three-story facility provides about five times the storage plus the opportunity for the public to get a glimpse of the collection. Construction was funded in part by a contribution from a nonprofit partner, the Yellowstone Foundation.

The research area is designed with plenty of light and table space, and the lobby has ample room for exhibits. When the center opens in the spring, one of the first items displayed will be a stagecoach used for park transport in days long past.

The collection dates to Yellowstone's opening in 1872. Over the years, curators have accumulated what one local newspaper describes as "mind-boggling amounts of delightful miscellany"—stickers, scrapbooks from family vacations, knickknacks of all stripes.

The facility allows for inevitable growth. Recently, the park acquired the Susan and Jack Davis Collection, the most complete private holding of Yellowstone memorabilia. The Davises began gathering material in the 1950s, and the collection now numbers over 20,000 items: advertising, historic photographs, stereoviews, menus, decals, and furniture.

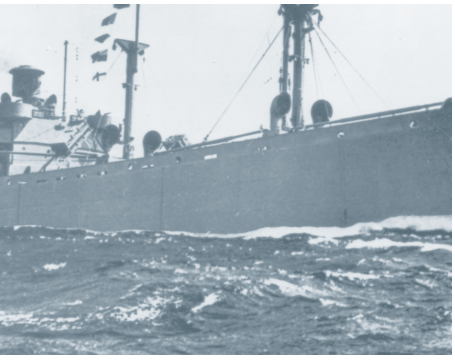
While the building was under construction, staff documented every item in the collection. The site chosen by the National Park Service—formerly a gravel pit and rail yard—meant that the project would not destroy an untouched landscape. The new center was built according to strict NPS curation guidelines, with temperature and humidity controls, thick firewalls, and a state-of-the-art security system. For its extensive collection of documents, the center conforms with standards set by the National Archives.

The Yellowstone Heritage and Research Center is expected to accommodate another 25 years of collecting. Says Yellowstone's Maria Copozzi, "People will send us things—sometimes anonymously through the mail. Old people send us things they got when they were here in the 1930s or when they were five or six. They really want the park to have them."

For more information, contact Colleen Curry, Yellowstone Heritage and Research Center, 200 Old Yellowstone Trail, Gardiner, MT 59030, (307) 344-2262, email colleen_curry@nps.gov, www.nps.gov/yell.

BELOW: U.S. MARITIME COMMISSION

Liberty ship at sea.



Students experience the World War II struggle for survival in **Liberty Ships and Victory Ships: America's Lifeline in War.** The lesson plan taps research to establish the national significance of several surviving vessels. Students get a sense of the difficulties that geography posed in the campaign to supply the Allies; extensive information is provided on ships berthed in San Francisco, Baltimore, Tampa, Los Angeles, and elsewhere. An activities component equips students to interview people in their communities who worked on the home front.

The series now has over 100 plans; to help teachers with their educational goals, the National Park Service recently grouped them according to the curriculum standards of the National Council for the Social Studies. The 10-categories distinguish among aspects of social studies such as culture, technology, governance, and civic ideals.

For more information on Teaching with Historic Places, go to www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp.